



The Law of Messiah is intrinsically different from the Law of Moses. The latter has become obsolete through the death and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah.

By John B. Metzger

The Law of Messiah



The rule of life for believers today is the Law of Messiah, which is comprised of many imperative commands given in the Gospels and the epistles. The Law of Messiah is unique as it allows people to live in Messiah and have victory over the habitual sin in their lives on a daily basis because of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. In this new series, John Metzger will expound on the Law of Messiah, starting in this edition of Ariel's Magazine by shedding light on the participants in this law and what the law is.¹

Israel, also clearly identified in Jeremiah. You see the same two participants in Ezekiel 36, where more of the nature and purpose of the New Covenant is revealed. In the New Testament, the spiritual benefits of this covenant are extended to the Gentiles, who are the third participant—unseen and unidentified in the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul defines this as the mystery revealed in Ephesians (3:4-9) and Colossians (1:26). Back in Jeremiah, this unconditional covenant is clearly made between God and the *house of Judah* and the *house of Israel*, making the covenant exclusively Jewish, to the nation of Israel only.

A quick and simple Greek language lesson will be helpful here. In the Greek used in the New Testament, there are several tenses that give the reader information about the action taking place. There is a **present active indicative** tense, meaning the subject is acting. There is also a **present passive indicative**, which means that the subject is being acted upon² (for instance, the subject, God, is doing the action to/upon man). There is an **imperative** tense which indicates the giving of a command. For example, the imperative appears in cohortative or positive commands and in prohibitive or negative commands.³

Put into the context of this study, the New Covenant was God acting upon man (indicative) in giving us salvation (regeneration, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, imputation, redemption, and so on), as well as giving us the indwelling presence of

the Holy Spirit who regenerated us and removed our sin. God acted, not man. Man had no part in the salvation given except to believe by faith in the finished work of Messiah on the cross of Calvary. There are 33 positional truth⁴ statements of the **action of God** in our salvation, which are borne out in Scripture in all that He did in saving us from our sins and placing us into His own family. These statements are then followed by His commands, the imperatives, on how we are to walk this *new life in Messiah*. This is the Law of Messiah, with well over 600 commands given to us by Yeshua and His apostles (indicative) that we, as the subject, are now to obey (imperatives) and live by daily. Yeshua saved us (indicative) and then laid out commands (imperatives) on how we are to live and walk in Him.



What Is the Law of Messiah?

The foundation of the Law of Messiah is love. Yeshua gave us an explicit command to love one another even as He and the Father loved us. However, love is not the entirety of the Law of Messiah nor is the Sermon on the Mount or other teachings of Yeshua. His teaching on love forms the foundation of His law, but Yeshua, through the writings and teaching of the apostles, has given us hundreds of new laws that are different in nature and character from the old Mosaic Law.



The Participants

The foundation of the Law of Messiah is the New Covenant. This is an unconditional covenant with two participants. The primary participant, revealed in Jeremiah 31:31, is the LORD, who makes this unconditional covenant with the second participant,

¹ This series is based on John Metzger's excellent and important book *The Law, Then and Now: What About Grace* (Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2019), available through Ariel Ministries at www.ariel.org. The text is published here with minor edits to better fit the format of this magazine.

² Ray Summers, *Essential of New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1950), 12, 35.

³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴ See Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Thirty-Three Things: A Study of Positional Truth*, Manuscript #110 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, n.d.).



Believers have been empowered to live out these new laws through the power of the Holy Spirit, who resides in them because of the inauguration of the New Covenant by the blood of the covenant through the Lamb of God, Yeshua.

In 1 John 2:6, a standard is set that applies to every true believer in Messiah: We are under a moral and legal obligation to be walking like Yeshua. John states: *He who is constantly saying that he as a habit of life is living in close fellowship with and dependence upon Him is morally obligated just as that One [Yeshua] conducted Himself, also himself in the manner spoken of to be conducting himself* (1 Jn. 2:6).⁵ Wuest focuses on the Greek tenses of these words to point out that we as believers are morally obligated to walk in this present life even as Yeshua Himself walked. That is not possible for humans except by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who can empower us to live it and to walk it, not in our power but in His power. Notice how high John sets the bar. Such conduct can only be obtained or accomplished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers because of the New Covenant for those who surrender to the Holy Spirit. We are under a legal obligation to Yeshua the Messiah, not to Moses; that obligation is not expressed by the externalities of the Mosaic Law, but in the inward heart of every believer, which is again evidence of the outworking of the New Covenant in the hearts and lives of Jewish and Gentile believers in Messiah Yeshua. As Verlyn Verbrugge put it in the *Expositor's Bible Com-*

mentary on Romans and Galatians:

What is this "law of Christ"? Since *nomos* (law) has a wide variety of meanings and Paul is known to play with the meaning of this word, presumably he is referring to the life principle that manifested itself in Christ's own life and that shaped Paul's life, namely, the principle of self-sacrifice and of love as the summary of the law.⁶

Verbrugge is correct: *Nomos* refers to and is connected to the life principle seen in Messiah's life, which was the same principle that shaped Paul's life, namely, self-sacrifice and love (to summarize the Law of Messiah). But his comments reveal an incomplete understanding of the Law of Messiah, and he does not tell us what that law is. His statement concerning the foundation of the Law of Messiah is valid, but it does not explain what was built upon the foundation by the apostles of Messiah.

Love is the fulfilling of the Law of Messiah. This love is speaking of human relationships, but there is more to the Law of Messiah than love. What is lacking is the meat on the bones. The Law of Messiah includes our actions and our behavior, which come from our hearts that have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the New Covenant. In addition, this Law of Messiah includes instruction, correction, and warnings. The Law of Messiah has been divinely revealed by Messiah Himself through the teachings of His apostles. Certainly, the Law of Messiah encompasses love, but it consists of more than love: It includes the teachings that the apostles gave to

individuals and to the churches. In the epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, and the writer of Hebrews, there are well over 600 imperative commands given by Yeshua who Himself is the Word of God (Jn. 1:1-14; Rev. 19:13) through His apostles. These commands are just as authoritative as the laws given by God through Moses in the Old Testament. But Yeshua fulfilled the Mosaic Law and rendered it inoperative by His death, burial, and resurrection, and initiated the Law of Messiah instead.

The Law of Messiah is also a system of law given by Yeshua to His apostles as the standard that we as believers are to walk in. It governs our relationship to God and to humankind in general, as well as our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Messiah Yeshua. His new law comes in the form of imperative commands to teach, instruct, guide, correct, encourage, strengthen, and warn us about sin and false teachers. It also includes the ministry of the Holy Spirit that is to guide us into all truth. As we yield to Him and surrender to Him, He will give us the power to walk the believer's life in the Spirit, walking in the light and not in the flesh, carnality, or darkness.

In the next part of this series, we will examine the purpose of the Law of Messiah and some of its statutes.



John Metzger's excellent and important book *The Law, Then and Now: What About Grace* is available through Ariel Ministries at www.ariel.org.

⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 566.

⁶ Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 11:339.